

# THE CELEBRATION OF 150 YEARS OF 'CEYLON TEA' IN 2017

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The Tea Industry of Sri Lanka will celebrate its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2017. The commercial cultivation of tea commenced in 1867, fortuitously supplanting coffee, which, till then, was the country's main cash crop, shortly thereafter devastated by a ravaging plant blight. A Scotsman named James Taylor is reputed to have developed the first commercial plantation and commenced the manufacture of Tea on Loolcondra Estate, Hewaheta. He was followed by other pioneers, who not only contributed agriculturally, but also helped create the infrastructure, which continues to facilitate the supply chain of this great Industry.

For over one hundred years, the Tea Industry sustained the economy of this country and continues to contribute significantly to it. Though, currently, eclipsed by one or two other revenue earning sources, which have emerged in more recent years, it is still one of the highest foreign exchange earners for the country, contributing over US Dollars 1.5 billion.

The Tea Industry also supports approximately 20 percent of the country's population, through direct and indirect employment, out-sourcing and dependent families, which extends to a number of ancillary industries, such as shipping, transportation, printing, packaging, etc. Additionally, tea contributes 15% of the nation's foreign exchange earnings and generates 65% of export agriculture revenue.

The Sri Lanka Tea Board, in collaboration with the Colombo Tea Traders' Association, is organizing a number of celebratory events to coincide with this Sesquicentennial Anniversary, throughout the year 2017.

- This will commence with the unveiling of a sculptured bust of James Taylor at the Head Office of the Sri Lanka Tea Board – 19<sup>th</sup> January 2017.
- A first day cover and a series of stamps will be issued in February 2017, followed by the release of a Rs.10/- coin by the month of August, to commemorate this anniversary.
- Over the months of March to July, a series of Education Fairs will be conducted in all seven tea producing regions, to serve as an outreach to the local community in an endeavor to infuse a better understanding of the relevance and importance of the Tea Industry to the country and its career opportunities and to create an awareness of the significance of this historic event.

- A unique 'Global Ceylon Tea Party', hosted by the country's Diplomatic Missions worldwide, will be held in July 2017 in each time-zone around the world, serving fine Ceylon Teas and a specially created biscuit for the occasion by Maliban Biscuit Manufactories, the oldest biscuit manufacturer in Sri Lanka.
- The publication of a Commemorative Book, an authentic historical record of 'The 150 Years of Ceylon Tea', will be launched on June 14, 2017.
- A 'Grand Charity Tea Auction' will be held on June 15, 2017, the entire proceeds of which will be invested in charitable projects, benefitting the work force of the Plantation Sector.
- During the month of July 2017, an International Tea Festival, to promote amongst Tourists and Sri Lankans the uniqueness of Ceylon Tea and the tea culture, through a festive atmosphere, will be held, with a focus on street events, featuring Tea stalls, food stalls and entertainment, including performances depicting tea related activities. It is intended that this will become an annual event in the future.
- An International Colombo Tea Convention will be held from August 8 to 11, 2017, with an expected approximately 300 overseas delegates, apart from significant local participation. Erudite presentations will be delivered by eminent personalities in the Global Tea Trade and the International Business Arena, both from overseas and Sri Lanka, with expertise and experience in a wide spectrum of relevant disciplines, setting the tone for stimulating discussions and sharing of diverse views, with competent moderators regulating the different session.
- Along with the Colombo Tea Convention, other international events will be held in Colombo, which will attract more international participation from both producer and consumer countries. Immediately preceding the Convention, the Inter Session meeting of the FAO/IGG on Tea which will be held in Colombo on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of August 2017.
- A Plantation Sri Lanka 2017 Exhibition will be held from August 11 to 13, 2017 at Sirimavo Bandaranaike Memorial Exhibition Centre, to enable Exporters, Manufactures, Producers and Service Providers in the Tea Industry, both local and international, to showcase their products and services.
- An Award Ceremony to recognize stakeholders in the Tea Industry, encompassing all sectors in every region, ranging from the Best Tea Plucker, Tea Taster and Tea Blender to the Best Manufacturer and the most Creative Innovator, etc.
- A Programme will be initiated to upgrade the Ceylon Tea Museum at Kandy, which is of great relevance to the history of the Industry.

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